

The Colonel Dean Britton House  
Between Plainsboro and Scott's Corner  
Middlesex County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

The Colonel Dean Britton House  
Between Plainsboro and Scott's Corner  
Middlesex County, New Jersey

Owners: Estate of Nathaniel Britton decd. (Mrs. Mary E.  
Riggs, occupant)

Dates of Erection: Rear unit before 1799; front unit  
1825-35

Architect: Unknown

Builders: 1st unit by Aaron Dean Sr. (1739-1799) 2nd  
unit by his son-in-law Nathaniel Britton  
(1768-1837)

Present Condition: Original, well maintained

Number of Stories: One and one-half in rear unit; two  
and cellar in front unit

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - Fieldstone laid in lime mortar

Exterior walls - hewn oak timber frame, brick-  
filled and white pine clapboarded

Interior walls - frame, lathed and plastered

Chimneys - brick, built into west side only  
of main house, and into outer gable end  
of rear unit

Roof - gable, wood shingled; 4-column "doric"  
front portico

Historical Data:

The identity as above stated of the original  
owner of the older and rear unit of this house, as also  
that of the subsequent owner for whom the impressive  
four-column porticoed front unit was added thereto, is  
determined by search of the title to the property as  
recorded in the County archives, reported as follows:

NOT RECORDED  
BY [illegible]  
[illegible]

The older unit was evidently built before 2 February 1799, the date of the will of Aaron Dean of South Brunswick Township, Middlesex County, (proved 3 April next) and on the property which he devised thereby to his son Aaron and John equally. In the division of this real estate among the two, a lot of some 162 acres having a frontage of 2640 feet on the south side of the road from Scott's corner to Plainsboro was awarded to John by a deed of quitclaim dated 13 November 1801 from his brother Aaron Dean Jr., being the lot on which the house stands, with a 26 acre lot in the swamp and a 10 acre lot on the said road.

By deed of quitclaim from his wife's brother, the said John V. Dean of South New Brunswick Township, dated 21 March 1802, and by deed of 1 April 1802 from Robert Davidson and wife Margaret, the same three lots were conveyed in consideration of 1000 and of 500 pounds respectively to Nathaniel Britton of same place<sup>(a)</sup>.

By his will of 20 April 1835, proved 21 March 1839, this grantee Nathaniel Britton, during whose lifetime the front unit of the house was erected in the Greek Revival fashion, devised to his wife Ruth a 56 acre tract on the south side of the road from Cranberry to the "Plains Tavern" which lot he had purchased from the estate of John Dean decd. as above cited and also to her, during widowhood, and afterwards to his son Dean Britton for lifetime and finally to the latter's children, the residue of the real estate (including the homestead here considered).

(a) By deed of 25 May 1807, this Nathaniel Britton and wife Ruth, of Middx. Co., N.J., conveyed to Levi and William Updike of Somerset Co., for \$3380, a 169 acre farm in So. Brunsk. Tp., Middx. Co., fronting on the so. side of the Drinking Brook, reciting title from his father Nicholas Britton decd., and the latter's by deed of 16 May 1768 from his father, Nicholas Britton Sr. (Middx. Deed Bk. No. 7 p. 804). Nathaniel Britton, b. 3 June 1768, d. 3 Apr. 1837, mar. Ruth Dean, b. 21 Apr. 1772, d. 13 Feb. 1862, dau. of Aaron Dean, above said, and wife Gertrude Vliet.

The only son and heir, Dean Britton(b) died intestate there in South Brunswick Township, and on 26 July 1870 the administration upon his estate was granted to Mary S. Britton. His children and heirs named in the probate records were Ruth wife of Aaron Dean, Aaron D. Britton, John D. Britton, Nathaniel Britton, Kate L. Britton and Mary L. wife of Voorhees Rightmire. The house is known by his name today.

By deed of 1st April 1872, the heirs conveyed to their said brother Nathaniel Britton the homestead tract, as 104 acres, reciting the deed of 1st April 1802 from Robert Davidson, mentioned above, and describing the land as lying in Cranbury Township (created from South Brunswick in 1872).

Nathaniel Britton, who thus came into possession, died 11 February 1922, intestate, leaving a widow Rebecca G. Britton of Plainsboro, and seven daughters, Mary E. Riggs of Cranbury, Elizabeth Okeson of Kingston, Laura Johnson of Princeton, Catherine L. Mount of Plainsboro, Louise Bodine of Trenton, Maud E. Rue of Plainsboro and Wahneta Mc Namee of same place, all in New Jersey.

By deed of 29 December 1936, the said Wahneta McNamee, widow, of the borough of Plainsboro, conveyed to her sisters Elizabeth Okeson of South Brunswick Township and Catherine L. Mount of Princeton, her one-seventh interest in the homestead farm of 104 acres, reciting its identity with that conveyed to their late father, Nathaniel Britton by deed of 1st April 1872 as above mentioned.

(b) List of Freeholders, So. Brunsk. Twp., includes Dean Britton, 1841-6, 1850-4, 1859 and 1863. (Clayton, Hist. of Union and Mddx. Cos., 1882) Dean Britton, b. 5 Oct. 1795, d. 18 June 1870, mar. Mary S. Dye, b. 4 May 1806, d. 8 Sept. 1890. (F.B. Lee, Geneal. & Mem. Hist. of N.J., 1910, III, 883).

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Reference:

Search of title in the land and  
probate records of Middlesex  
County by Thomas J. Riley, H.A.B.S.  
abstractor, reported 27 August 1940

Lewis D. Cook  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer